

# Dance Management and Administration

## Case Study Questionnaire



Name: **Sarah Trist**

Job Title: **Freelance Dance Manager and Producer**

### **Please can you describe what your job entails? What does a typical day for you involve?**

My job involves everything from booking the trains on tour to lobbying for better funding for clients. On a typical day I might be talking to a venue manager about booking a client's show, paying invoices, setting up a post performance discussion with a leading academic and letting a touring company know all the details of the following week's schedule. It's nothing if not varied.

### **What is your background or training?**

I trained as a musician and studied Music at University.

### **Can you describe your career path? Have you always wanted to work in this field?**

I was drawn to arts administration as a result of a visit to the careers library at university. I always thought I would end up working for an orchestra or opera company given my background, but ended up in dance after several years working in theatres where there was a mixture of art forms presented. I found there was a lack of good, strong managers in the dance field at the time I entered it in the early 1990s (now there are lots of course), so my business grew quite rapidly.

### **What do you most enjoy about your job?**

Learning about artists' ideas for making new work – they are nearly always original and often very exciting. Visioning how those ideas can be realised is the next part and that's also completely absorbing. Once I've seen a way of making something happen and started to see other people wanting to get involved, that's a real buzz.

### **What qualifications are required to work in this field, and where might someone gain these?**

I learned on the job, sorry, so I'm not terribly up on this, but there are now degree courses in Arts Management.

### **What particular qualities and skills are necessary?**

I think a good dance manager and producer needs to be multi-skilled and able to prioritise. Being able to communicate with a wide range of people is also important. Talking about an artist's work is probably the most vital part of the job, so you need to be reasonably articulate and good at placing artistic ideas in their cultural context.

### **Is this a competitive area to work in? Can it be difficult to get work?**

There are lots of dance artists looking for management support, but very few freelance dance managers, so yes, there is lots of work for freelance dance managers, but you do need to be experienced and prove yourself. That obviously takes time so, in the beginning it could be challenging. Inexperienced people will struggle and in all likelihood fail.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was considering a career in dance management or administration?**

My advice would be to gain experience in an arts organization where you are employed before moving into the freelance world. Talk to Independent Dance Managers network about joining the group. They run short courses for dance managers and would be dance managers which help people learn appropriate skills and develop working practices. Working alongside a senior member of the group would probably be the best experience of all, and occasionally members do require administrative assistance, so it is worth asking them individually about that.

### **Web-Site Links**

Sarah Trist Dance Management Agency: [www.stdma.com](http://www.stdma.com)

Independent Dance Managers Network: [www.idmn.co.uk](http://www.idmn.co.uk)